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Fairy



SARAH J. BURKE



Tales



for

Little



Readers.

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FAIRY TALES

FOR

LITTLE READERS

BY

SARAH J. BURKE

Tell old tales and laugh
at gilded butterflies.
—KING LEAR.

NEW YORK

A. LOVELL & COMPANY

LONDON

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PREFACE.

In offering to the public this paraphrase of the fairy tales which have been the delight of children for ages, the author submits what has already done duty in the home circle.

The endeavor has been to render them in such a manner that their chief merit may lie in the fact that they are suited to be read *by* children rather than *to* them. They are intended to answer the needs of those whose guardianship of children has made them the constant subjects of the exacting demand: "Read to me! Read to me!"

The time-honored reply of the mother of Sir William Jones to the child's re-iterated questions, "Read and you will know," perhaps needs to be accepted with the modification which Emerson's injunction supplies—"Read nothing which does not interest you." How constantly would "eyes be off the book," if the peruser of the ordinary school

reader drew the line at "interest"! A reading-book fails to accomplish its purpose, if it does not, itself, hold the eyes and mind of the reader fixed.

The author has reasoned that the rendering of tales, which have been found delightful and profitable in the home, might prove available for school use. The child at home is the child in school—he crosses no magic line when he enters the class-room.

Her effort has been that this little volume should present no difficulties greater than those of a Second Reader; and yet she realizes that the child's progress is retarded and the dignity of childhood set at naught by "writing down" to him.

She has tried to select from the many tales, which seemed almost to clamor for presentation, a few whose variety of plot appeared to make them most desirable—the best known—perhaps the best loved of

" The tales which all the ages long
Have kept the world from growing old."

And it may be she will lose nothing in admitting that, in her selection, she has consulted and taken the verdict of the lovers of her old time-worn and thumb-worn manuscripts.

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LITTLE RED RIDING-HOOD.

A VERY, very long time ago, when the world was young, there lived a little girl whose name was Red Riding-Hood. I know that it is a queer name, but I think it is pretty, and I will tell you why her mother gave it to her.

When she was a small child, her grandmother had made for her a long, red cloak with a hood, and because the little girl liked this cloak very much, and always wore it when she went out, her mother used to call her Red Riding-Hood; and so it came to pass that her real name was not often used. In fact, I do not think that I have ever heard it,

The child had worn this cloak for two or three years, and at the time of which I am writing, it had grown quite too short for her, or perhaps I should say she had grown too long for the cloak; and yet she did not like to leave it off.

Little Red Riding-Hood had rosy cheeks, dark blue eyes, brown curls, and a sweet mouth, which was almost always smiling. She was a happy child, and everybody loved her, for she was good.

She lived in a pretty little house, with rose-bushes on one side of it, and a tall oak-tree on the other side. She used to gather the roses for her mamma every morning, while they were in bloom, and she loved to play under the shade of the oak-tree with her little friends. One day, while she was playing, her mother called her to her side, and said—

“My dear child, your grandmother is very ill indeed. I want you to go to her house, and take her, for me, this pat of butter which

I have just made, these cakes, and this fruit. She will be glad to see you, and you must give her a kiss for me, and one for yourself."

"I shall be glad to go," said Red Riding-Hood, as she put on her cloak, and took her little basket in her hand.

"Good-bye, dear," said her mamma.

"Good-bye," said the child, as she gave her mamma a kiss and a tight hug. She felt very proud of being trusted to go so far, all alone.

Now the house in which Red Riding-Hood's grandmother lived was far away, and the little girl knew that she must walk through the woods to get to it, and she had never gone there alone before; but the thought of fear did not come into her head.

She loved to walk under the trees, to pick the wild flowers, and to hear the birds singing in the trees above her head. She knew how to cross the brook and not wet even the tips of her small toes. Many times she had

tried stepping from one stone to another, and she had never once fallen into the water. But then her mamma had always been with her. "But I can do it alone, just as well," she said to herself.

So on this bright summer morning, off she went, swinging her little basket back and forth by the handle. The songs of the birds put all sad thoughts out of the merry child's head, and she found herself singing too.

"Perhaps I ought not to sing when my dear grandmother is so ill," she said to herself more than once, as she walked along; and then she would be quiet for a time, but before she knew it she was singing again.

She could not help being merry, and I know that her dear grandmother would not have wished her to help it. If she could have seen little Red Riding-Hood then, singing, swinging her basket, and stopping now and then to gather wild-flowers, the sight would almost have cured her.

But all at once the child heard a noise in the bushes at her side, and she turned to look. What do you think she saw? A great wolf walked slowly toward her and looked up in her face! But she was not afraid.

She looked into his eyes, and they did not seem fierce—for even a wolf can look kind when he tries to do so—and she rubbed his back with her little fat hand, and she thought to herself “What a thick fur coat for such a warm spring day!”

“Good morning, my dear,” said he.

“Good-morning, Mr. Wolf,” said polite Red Riding-Hood.

“Where are you going?” he asked.

“To see my grandmother, who is ill.”

“What have you got in that basket?”

“A pat of butter, some little cakes and some fruit. My mamma sent them to my grandmother, with her love and a kiss.”

“And let me give you a kiss also, to take to your grandmother,” said he.

"Oh, no, I thank you, Mr. Wolf," said she. "But I will tell her of your kindness, and that you are sorry she is ill, if you wish me to do so."

The wolf laughed. "Do so by all means," said he. "Where does your grandmother live?"

"About a mile farther, I should think," said the child.

"Which road do you take?"

"Both of these roads lead to my grandmother's house," said Red Riding-Hood. "When I come with my mamma, we sometimes take one road, and sometimes the other. I do not care which one I take."

"I have a mind to go to see your grandmother, too," said the wolf. "You go by that road, and I will go by this one, and we shall see which one of us will reach the house first."

"But are you sure that you will know the house when you come to it?" she asked.

"Why I never thought of that," said he; but this was just a trick on his part. He knew every house for miles around.

"It is the little red house in a grove of maple-trees, just beyond the bridge which crosses the brook."

"Ah, now I know!" said the wolf, laughing to himself.

Now the sly creature knew that the road he had chosen was not so long as the one he had told Red Riding-Hood to take, and besides that, he knew that he could run far faster than she. Indeed, by this time the child was tired, and she did not try to hurry.

She walked along rather slowly, and at last she sat down under a tree to rest, and ate one of the little cakes from her basket; after which she knelt down by the side of the brook, and, leaning over, drank some of the fresh, cold water, just as her little kitten used to drink his milk from a saucer.

She saw her own face looking up at her out

of the brook, and she laughed. Then, of course, the face in the brook laughed also. Then she ate one more little cake from her basket—for she was hungry, and she knew that her dear grandmother would let her have it—and then she went on her way, and soon found herself at the red house in the maple-grove.

But the wolf had reached the house first, and I must tell you about that. As the old lady lay, half-asleep in her bed, she heard a low tap at the door.

“Who is there?” she asked; “I am too ill to rise and open the door.”

Then the wolf said, trying to speak low and sweet, like the gentle child—“I am little Red Riding-Hood. I am so sorry you are ill. I have brought you some very nice things to eat, dear grandmother. I have a pat of butter, some little cakes, and some fruit. Mamma sent them to you, with her love and a kiss.”

"That sweet child has taken cold," thought the old lady. "Her voice is very hoarse"; but she only said,—and her own voice was so weak that it could hardly be heard—"Come right in, my dear. You are very kind."

But, oh! when she saw the dreadful wolf, she knew that he was far from kind. He seemed, now, just the fierce, bad wolf which he truly was. He had crept slyly into the house, and now he was going to do a dreadful thing, because he was hungry.

I must get through this part of my story quickly. He ate Red Riding-Hood's grandmother, and took her place in the bed, waiting until the little girl should come and find him there.

And he did not have long to wait. Soon he heard a step on the walk that led up to the house, and after that, a light tap at the door.

"Who is it?" asked the wolf.

"It is I, your own little Red Riding-Hood," she said. "Poor grandmother!" she thought. "How her sickness has changed her voice! I should hardly know it."

"Come right in," said the wolf; but the child could not open the door. "Pull the string, and the latch will go up," he said; for he did not want to get out of bed himself, fearing that she might see that he was the wolf, and not her dear grandmother. So Red Riding-Hood did pull the string, and the door flew open.

Then the child went over to the side of the bed, to kiss her grandmother, but the wolf spoke to her from away down among the bed-clothes. She could not see him at all.

"Shut that door, quickly," said he. "The doctor says that not a breath of air should blow upon me. What have you got there, child?"

"I have brought a pat of butter, some little cakes, and some fruit. Mamma sent them to you, with her love and a kiss."

Just as if the wolf did not know all that ! Those were the very words that Red Riding-Hood had said to him when she met him in the woods.

“And, O grandmother !” she added ; “I met a very kind wolf on my way here this morning. He told me to tell you that he is very sorry you are ill.”

“Ah, indeed ! Well, wolves are not so bad as some people try to make out. I have known many a kind wolf in my long life, my dear. Now put the things that you have in the basket over on the table yonder, and then come and lie down by my side. I am sure you must be very tired after your long walk.”

Little Red Riding-Hood thought it very strange that her grandmother should wish her to go to bed in the daytime ; but she was a good child, and did not often ask “Why ?” when she was told to do anything. No thought of fear came into her little head.

She put her basket on the table, and took out of it the pat of butter, the little cakes and the fruit. Then she took off her red cloak, and, going over to the side of the bed, she said—"Make room for me, grandmother."

The child thought—"Why does she not kiss me? It must be because she is so very ill. I wish my mamma were here." But she did not say one word, and she lay quite still. Soon the wolf put his arm—his forelegs were like arms, you know—around her, and she said:

"Why, grandmother! What big arms you have."

"The better to hug you, my dear," said the wolf.

"Not so hard, please," said she; and then, for the very first time, she was just a little bit afraid; and for some minutes she did not say a word.

"What a little goose I am!" she thought, at last. "Here I am, safe in my own grand-

mother's house, and yet I am afraid!" Again she spoke :

"And what big legs you have! grandmother."

"The better to run with, my dear," said the wolf, with a growl.

"And your ears! why, how long they are!" and Red Riding-Hood took one of the wolf's ears in her own soft hand, and smoothed it.

"The better to hear with, my dear," growled the wolf. And then Red Riding-Hood did wish that she could not hear quite so well; for the words were not said in the tone which her grandmother would have used.

"Surely she has a dreadful cold," thought Red Riding-Hood; and she stepped softly out of bed to see if the door were shut quite tight. The wolf's big, bright eyes were turned toward her as she came back to bed, and the child could not help saying :

"O grandmother, what big eyes you have!"

"The better to see with, my dear," said the wicked wolf.

Then Red Riding-Hood turned over and closed her own eyes. I do not know how long she lay there, thinking ; but after a time, the wolf yawned, and the child opened her eyes and cried in surprise :

"Why, grandmother dear ! what big, big teeth you have !"

Now Red Riding-Hood might almost have known what the wolf would say to these words. He sat up in bed and licked his lips slowly, with his eyes fixed on the child.

"The better to eat you, my dear !" he cried, and her heart stood still.

But just at this moment the door flew open, and quick as a flash the wolf hid his head under the bed-clothes. There, full in the sunlight, stood a figure that he well knew. It was that of a noble prince who lived in a castle about a mile off, and who was a famous hunter, being, as every other hunter owned, the best shot in all the country round.

He was dressed in dark green cloth; the long feather in his hat floated in the morning breeze, and his bow was slung at his back. More than once the wolf had fled at the sight of him in the depths of the wood; but at last the wicked creature was caught, and there was no escape.

The hunter held out his arms to little Red Riding-Hood, and she ran to him; for she well knew that such kind eyes could only belong to a kind man. He wiped away her tears, and, wrapping her in the little red cloak, he took her out of the cottage, and set her down on the grass, beneath the branches of a great oak-tree, just outside of her grandmother's door.

Then, going back to the cottage, he took an arrow from his quiver, and aimed at the head of the wolf, as he stood trying to open the window by which he hoped to make his escape before the hunter's return.

"The prince never needs a second shot,"

his friends used to say ; and truly, in this case, one shot was enough. The wolf fell to the floor, lifeless, and little Red Riding-Hood, who had heard him fall, hid her face in her hands, and sobbed aloud.

“The wolf was very polite to me when he met me in the wood. ‘Take me home to my mother, if you please, good hunter,’ said the child.

CINDERELLA.

AWAY back in the long-ago years, when kings and queens and princes were as plenty as blackberries, and when many a good little girl had a fairy godmother, there lived, in a far-away country, a man who was very happy with his wife and one little daughter.

But I am sorry to say, that, while the child was still quite young, her mother died. Very lonely the house was for a long time ; but the little girl was brave, and did all she could do to make her father happy.

After some years, her father said—"My dear, I am going away, to bring home to you a new mamma. I hope you will try to love her very much."

And the child *did* try ; but the new mother did not love her step-child. She had two daughters of her own—for she had been married before—and in them she could see no fault.

They were selfish, cruel girls, and they, also, were unkind to their new sister, to whom their mother gave only hard work and much blame. The sisters called her "Cinderella," because, when she was tired out with washing, ironing and scrubbing all day, she used to sit in the chimney-corner in the evening, among the ashes, to rest.

But not a word of all that she had to bear did Cinderella tell her father. She knew that he could not help her, and she often thought that he did not look very happy himself. Sometimes at night she would lie awake on her hard little bed, trying to think of some way to make him glad—to make him smile as he used to smile when her own mamma was living.

The two step-sisters did not lie on hard beds. Everything in their rooms was very fine, and on the walls were long looking-glasses in which they could see themselves from head to toe. But what they saw in their looking-glasses did not always please them; for, as I have said, they were selfish and cruel, so their faces were not beautiful.

"I would not own it to Cinderella," said the elder sister, one day, "but all our fine clothes do not make us look as pretty as she. The mean little thing must have some secret of her own. I wonder what it is."

The younger sister said nothing; but their mother heard what her eldest daughter said, and she made up her mind that Cinderella should work harder than ever.

The poor girl had no looking-glass in her room, but sometimes she saw her own face smile back when she looked into the lake near her home, and she was glad that it was lovely. She had big brown eyes, a straight

nose and bright red lips ; her cheeks were rosy, and her hair lay in rings on her forehead, and tumbled in golden curls over her neck. Yes, Cinderella was beautiful.

One day she heard her sisters talking in very loud, high voices, and she thought to herself—" I wonder what has happened " ; but soon she knew it all. A lady from the court had called upon them, and had brought great news.

The King's palace was not far from their home, and the King was to give a grand ball for his oldest son, whose twenty-first birthday was very near. The two sisters were wild with delight in the hope of being asked to this ball, and that was the reason they were talking so loudly, both at once, and as fast as their tongues could fly.

Over and over again, when they awoke in the morning, they said, " I wonder if the King will invite us to-day."

Well, at last, a man from the palace came,

dressed all in scarlet cloth, and riding on a jet-black horse; and he brought the letter inviting the two sisters to the Prince's ball. Oh! how happy they were then! And Cinderella was glad, too. "I shall hear all about it when they come home," said she to herself.

But I am sorry to tell you that, before the Prince's birthday came, the two sisters had many quarrels about their ball-dresses, each wishing to look prettier than the other.

The elder sister was dark, and the younger one very, very fair; and I truly think that, if they had not had such ugly tempers, their faces would have been rather pleasant to look at. After they had tired themselves out with harsh and cross words, the elder sister said, one day:

"Suppose we ask Cinderella about our dresses. She has good taste. Indeed, I don't know where she got it, but she surely has; and she might help us to dress for the ball."

So they called Cinderella ; and she, not feeling at all jealous because she was not going to the ball herself, was very kind and helpful. The sisters sent away their hair-dresser, knowing that Cinderella would make them look far prettier than he.

When they were at last fully dressed—the elder sister in white brocade and rubies—the younger in white brocade also, but with rows of lovely pearls on her neck—the poor child could not help wishing, as she looked at them, that she, too, might dance at the Prince's ball.

“Do you not long to go, too?” asked the younger sister. I really do think that, for once in her life, she felt sorry for Cinderella, who, after all her kindness to them, must now sit at home in the chimney-corner.

“Oh ! indeed—” began the child, but the older sister cried out crossly :

“For pity's sake, do not put such silly notions into the head of that shabby girl ! She

is nobody—look! She has just this minute dropped a tear on my lovely lace flounce. Go away, I say!”

So Cinderella went back to the kitchen, and there she sat crying all alone, as she heard the carriage roll away in the distance.

Suddenly she thought she heard a sound at her side, something like a stirring among the ashes. She lifted her head, and lo! her godmother stood before her. Now the old woman was a fairy.

“Crying again! Cinderella,” said she.

“Don’t say ‘again,’ please, godmother,” said the child. “I have not cried once before since my mamma died. But oh! I do so want to go—to go——”

“Well, well, don’t stammer, child! Where do you want to go?”

“Dear godmother, don’t think me silly—I want to go to the Prince’s ball.”

“And why may you not go? I should like to know?”

Cinderella's heart jumped into her throat, but she could not answer one word.

"Umph! I think we can manage it," said the fairy. "Has the carriage gone yet?"

"Yes," said Cinderella sadly, for now she thought all hope was gone— "I heard it roll away an hour ago."

"Well, never mind. The pumpkins are not all gone," said her godmother. "I saw a fine, large one in the garden, as I came here."

"Oh!" thought Cinderella, "my poor, old godmother is quite crazy."

"Go out into the garden and bring me that pumpkin," said the fairy; and the child, who had learned to obey, brought the pumpkin and laid it at her godmother's feet.

One touch of the fairy's silver wand, and behold! it was no longer a pumpkin, but a gilt coach, far finer than the Prince's own. It was lined with yellow velvet, and the whole thing was a wonder of beauty.

"Mice, little mice,
Come out in a trice!"

said the godmother, opening the door of a pantry where a host of little mice were nibbling the cheese. Two by two, they came at her call, and she touched every one with her wand as it passed her, and there stood six milk-white horses, which she harnessed to the gilt coach.

Ten little mice had come out of the pantry, but the fairy did not need the last four, so she would not turn them into white horses, and sadly they went back to nibbling the cheese. "Oh!" sighed Cinderella, "I well know how their little mouse-hearts ache."

"Now, if you only had a coachman!" said the godmother.

"A rat, perhaps"—said Cinderella.

"A rat will be just the thing!" and in the same pantry they found one with long, silky whiskers. A finer coachman you never saw, and six lizards, brought from the garden-wall, were soon changed into footmen.

"Cinderella," said the fairy, bowing low, "enter your coach, and drive to the palace."

The child blushed scarlet, and the tears filled her eyes; but she said not a word, as she looked down at her bare feet, and her clothes covered with ashes.

"Foolish girl!" said her godmother, laughing. "Did you think I had forgotten?" At these words she touched Cinderella with her wand, and the shabby clothing, in a twinkling, was wholly changed.

A white satin robe with a long, sweeping train took the place of the soiled gown, diamonds sparkled on the white neck, while the little feet were clad in lovely silk stockings, and glass slippers, so tiny that even the godmother clapped her old hands with joy at the sight of them.

"That is the best piece of work I ever did," said she. "And now go, my child; but you must promise to leave the ball-room at midnight. If you stay one minute after twelve

o'clock, your coach will become a pumpkin, your coachman will be a rat, your horses mice, and you will have lizards for footmen. Worse than all, you will yourself wear your old clothes and be again the Cinderella of the chimney-corner."

The child promised, and the coachman whipped up his horses.

When Cinderella reached the palace she felt afraid to enter the great ball-room alone. There stood the Prince at the door, looking for somebody, she thought. And she was right; but little did she think that it was she for whom he watched.

It had been whispered, at the palace, that a beautiful princess was coming to the ball, unasked; but the Prince could not even find out her name. "This must be she," said he to himself; so he gave her his hand, and led her into the ball-room.

"Is she not lovely?" said the guests, as the princess moved about among them. They

even forgot to dance for the joy of looking at her ; and, when Cinderella herself danced, her little feet twinkled like stars. The King was delighted with her.

"She is so like you, when you were her age," said he to the Queen. "Do you not think she is beautiful enough for a wife for our son?"

"Almost," said the Queen, very softly ; and the King was pleased ; for never before had he known his wife to say as much as that in praise of any lady.

But Cinderella was not spoiled by all the kind words that fell upon her ears. She liked to hear them, of course, but she felt a little shy, and she was glad to see her sisters among the many strangers who crowded around her.

She took her place beside them, and they, thinking that the beautiful princess was charmed with their own grace and beauty, were almost too happy to answer when she spoke to them.

Now, just as the Prince was about to lead Cinderella out to dance once more, she heard the clock in the church steeple strike twelve. Begging to be excused, she bade good-night to the King and Queen, and the Prince himself led her down to her coach. Tired, but happy, she was soon safe at home, where her fairy godmother awaited her.

Cinderella, as she sat once more in the chimney-corner, told what a happy time she had had. "And there is to be another ball to-morrow night, godmother, dear," she said. "May I go? The Prince begged me to dance with him, and I promised."

But while she was talking, she heard a loud knock at the door, which she quickly opened, and there stood her two sisters.

"Have you had a pleasant time?" asked Cinderella.

"Indeed, yes!" answered the elder sister, who, for once, was in a good humor. "A strange princess, whose name nobody knows,

was at the ball, and she was plainly very much pleased with us both. She was dazzling!"

"Who was she?"

"How can I tell you what nobody knows—not even the Prince himself?"

"Oh! please," begged Cinderella, "will you not lend me your old yellow satin gown, that I may go to the palace to-night, and get one little peep at the lovely princess?"

"Are you crazy?" asked the sister, scowling. "*We* go to the ball to-night. Be ready to dress our hair for us this evening, and see that you are more careful in doing so, for one of my hair-pins has kept me in pain for the past hour. Now rake down the ashes, and go to bed."

All the next day, as Cinderella was busy washing, ironing and scrubbing, she said to herself—"I do hope I may go to the ball to-night!" Her godmother had given no promise, and the child hardly dared to hope.

However, she did her work quite as well as

on other days, for the night's pleasure had not spoiled her; and when evening came, oh! joy! there stood her godmother with the silver wand in her hand.

"Yes, you may go," she said, smiling, in answer to the look in Cinderella's eyes; and soon the same coach, coachman and footmen were ready.

More beautiful than ever was the happy girl this second night; for she wore red satin brocade, trimmed with point lace, while pearls shone on her neck and in her hair. The little glass slippers were, however, the same she had worn the night before.

"Remember! twelve o'clock!" said the fairy; and she slowly counted twelve, beating time with her silver wand, while she made her voice sound like the strokes of the clock in the old church-steeple.

"I will surely come at twelve," said Cinderella.

Again the Prince stood ready to welcome

her at the door of the ball-room. Perhaps she thought she should find him there—I do not quite know the thoughts of her heart, but I *do* know that he stooped and printed a kiss on her little hand, and then led her into the room, and opened the ball with her.

Again she had a most delightful evening. She danced with the Prince until she was tired, and she talked with him until she *ought* to have been tired, and yet she had kind words and smiles for all around her.

“She is beautiful, and her gown and jewels are beautiful; but her manners are still more lovely,” said the King.

The Prince did not say what *he* thought, but when the first stroke of twelve sounded from the church-steeple, he turned toward Cinderella and said:

“How quickly the hours go!”

But alas! she had gone also, and he just caught sight of the sweep of her red satin train, as she passed out of the door of the ball-room.

She had been afraid to say "good-night" to the Prince, lest the clock should stop striking while she stood there, and she should be changed to the little chimney-corner maid before his very eyes. And, indeed, she had slipped away with such quiet grace that nobody could say she had been rude.

Now I cannot tell you how great was the surprise and sorrow of the Prince. He followed her, but he was far too slow; for when he reached the palace-door, he said to himself:

"How quickly she has gone out of sight! And who can that shabby child be, who is running out of the gate?"

Then he went sadly back to the ball-room, but he danced no more that night. Cinderella walked home in her ragged gown—tired, sad, barefoot, with nothing left of her beautiful costume except one little glass slipper which she held tight in her hand. The other she had, in her flight, dropped on the ball-room

floor, and now it lay safe in the pocket of the Prince's white velvet coat. But of this, she knew nothing.

When the sisters returned from the ball the second night, they talked very loudly and fast. They told how the princess had fled from the ball-room, and they spoke of the Prince's sorrow when he found she had gone.

"But he seemed to take some comfort in looking at the little glass slipper," said the younger sister. "Once I saw a tear fall upon it."

"What slipper?" asked Cinderella.

"Why, the one the princess dropped on the ball-room floor," said the elder sister. "You stupid! What other could it be? They say he will never rest, until he finds the princess whose foot it will fit, and who must have the mate to it. Perhaps you wish to offer your own foot to be fitted," she added, with an ugly laugh.

Cinderella tightened her little soiled fingers

on the small slipper that lay in her own pocket but she said nothing ; and the next day she was washing, scrubbing and ironing as before. "Nobody can take from me the pleasure I *have* had," said she to herself, and she was glad she could remember.

Not long after this, there was a grand parade through the city. A page dressed in scarlet velvet rode before the Prince, carrying a little glass slipper on the end of a golden wand, and calling out loudly :

"I seek the lady to whom this slipper belongs !"

Then all the great ladies of the city offered their feet for the trial, and among them the two selfish sisters, whose feet were far from small. But no one of all those who tried could coax her foot into the dainty slipper which the Prince prized so highly. Indeed many of them were so anxious to succeed in wearing it, that the page feared it might be broken, and then he knew that the Prince would be very, very angry.

"May I try it?" asked Cinderella, as the page was about to leave the house, only too thankful that he had gotten the slipper safely of the foot of the elder sister.

"You!" cried the two proud, selfish girls, in one breath. But Cinderella only held out her hand to the page, who was half afraid to trust the frail thing to such soiled hands.

"Well, let her try it," said the weary Prince. Then he thought to himself—"Where have I seen a face something like that before?"

Then the frowning page sank on one knee, and lo! the slipper fitted Cinderella's foot to a charm. She quietly put her hand in her pocket, drew out the other slipper, put that on the other foot, and then, in her great joy, she stood up and clapped her little hands!

At the touch of the fairy slippers, her whole dress was changed, and she stood before the Prince, clothed in the white satin gown in

which he had first seen her, with diamonds on her neck and in her hair.

The two selfish sisters also knew her now for the strange princess whom they had met at the palace, and their hearts sank. The elder one would have fled from the room, but the younger sister took her by the hand and said, as they knelt at the feet of Cinderella :

“Forgive us, we pray you, and do not punish us as we deserve.”

“Forgive you? Indeed I will,” said the happy girl. “Punish you? Never! What I desire, more than anything else in this world, is to make people happy.”

“Then, I pray you, lovely princess, make *me* happy,” said the Prince, as he knelt to kiss her hand.

And so Cinderella made him happy. They were married, and she went with him to the court, and the King received her as a daughter. The Queen, too, became very fond of her, after a time, and was heard to say :

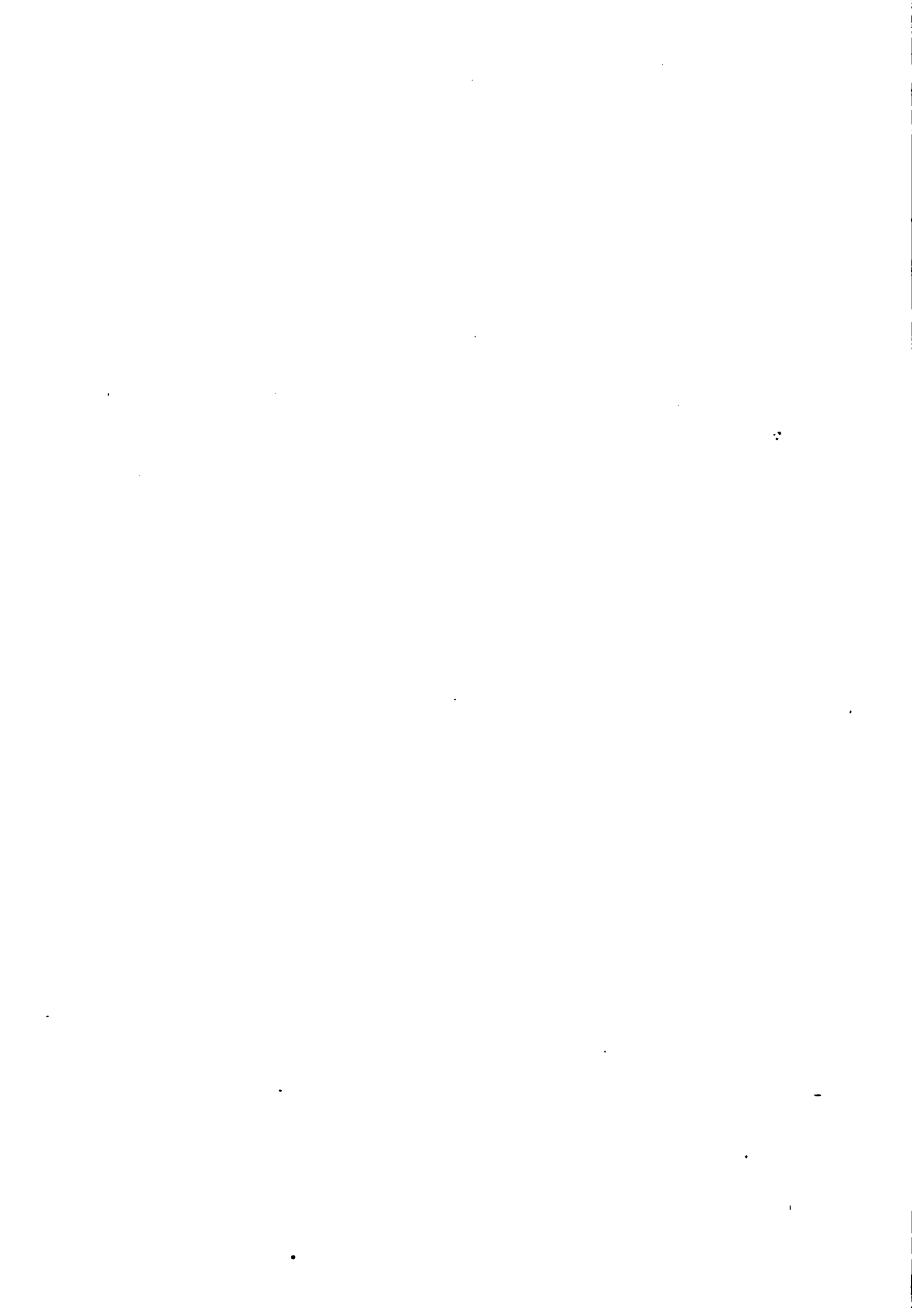
"Well, since my son, the Prince, *did* marry, I must own that he made a very wise choice." And this, for a mother-in-law, was thought to be very high praise at that time.

After the King died—but this did not happen for many years—the Prince became king. The sisters had by that time married gentlemen of the court, and they spent many happy days within the palace walls. They could hardly believe, when they came to think of it, that their little, hard-worked sister was really the Queen.

But, after all, people were not nearly so much surprised as they would be in our time; for in the days of fairies, so many wonderful things happened, that people were well used to surprises.

Many and many a family had a fairy godmother in it, but every godmother did not have so sweet a godchild as Cinderella. Her heart could not hold the memory of unkind-

ness ; and she gladly shared her happiness.
when she found it, with those who had once
made her life so miserable.



THE THREE BEARS.

I AM going to tell you a story about three bears. Not wild bears of the woods, but bears that lived in a house, ate porridge, sat on chairs, and slept in beds. They could talk, too.

Bears do not talk now—not in real words. They growl when they want to say anything. Perhaps these bears could talk because they lived long, long ago, when so many strange things happened—in the days of fairies and magic wands.

But they had nothing to do with fairies. They had, however, a great deal to do with a little girl who lived at that time, and her

name was Silver-Hair. But I must begin my story at the very beginning.

One of these bears was a large, heavy fellow, covered with coarse, black hair, and he was called the Great, Huge Bear. The brother next to him was not nearly so large, nor yet was he so small as the youngest, and he was called the Middle-Sized Bear. The youngest, who was very little and gentle, and whose hair was gray and soft—soft, that is to say, for a *bear*—was called the Little, Small, Wee Bear.

His brothers were so very fond of him that they loved to call him by all of his names, though the three mean the same thing. They were a very happy family, and many families of girls and boys might take them as examples. A happy bear-family, in these days, we could hardly hope to find.

Now, about their porridge-pots. Every one of them had his own separate porridge-pot and spoon. The Great, Huge Bear had a

great, huge pot ; the Middle-Sized Bear had a middle-sized pot ; while that of the Little, Small, Wee Bear was little, small and wee like himself.

Then every one of them had a chair of his own. The Great, Huge Bear had a great chair with arms ; the Middle-Sized Bear had a chair not nearly so large ; and the Little, Small, Wee Bear had one so small that you would think it had been made for a baby.

It was not a high-chair, for these brothers never sat up to the table, but ate, holding their porridge-pots on their knees—a way quite good enough for a bear.

Also every one of these bears had his own bed. Oh ! such a great, huge bed for the Great, Huge Bear !—a middle-sized bed for the Middle-Sized Bear, and for the Little, Small, Wee Bear there was a little, small, wee bed. You would laugh if you could see the small sheets and pillow-covers for that bed !

One day the Middle-Sized Bear—he al-

ways did the cooking—had made the porridge for breakfast, and poured it out into the pots to cool. Then he called his brothers, and they sat down to eat.

“Whew! It is too hot,” said the Great, Huge Bear, blowing his porridge. You would think one of his great puffs might cool it, but it was still hot. “Let us take a walk in the woods while it cools off.”

So out they went, hand in hand, the Little, Small, Wee Bear walking between the other two. Now you need not think that they meant to kill any animal they might meet, and take it home for dinner; for, as I told you before, they were kind bears,—not the cruel and wicked sort—and they ate porridge, and only that, three times a day.

They never thought to lock the door when they went out, for no one of them would ever think of going into any one's else house, and they did not think any one would enter theirs. Kind bears are like that.

But indeed, for once they thought wrong. A little girl, named Silver-Hair, the one I mentioned in the first part of this story, who had been naughty at her own mamma's breakfast-table, and whose mamma had sent her out to walk in the woods until she could be good-tempered—this little girl, I say, passed by the open door of the three bears' house.

"Aha!" said she, "I will enter. The house is empty—what good luck! And here is porridge, three pots of it, cooling on the table. I am sure it is better than the horrid porridge that my mamma wanted me to eat this morning. No wonder I could not swallow *that*! And she called me 'sulky!'"

Here naughty little Silver-Hair tasted the porridge in the pot of the Great, Huge Bear. But right away she dropped the spoon, and hopped high into the air, for her mouth was badly burnt.

Then she tasted the porridge in the pot of

the Middle-Sized Bear, and that she liked but little better. It was almost stone-cold.

Then she turned to the little, small, wee pot of the Little, Small, Wee Bear, and she found that just right. She emptied that porridge-pot in a few minutes—for by this time she was very, very hungry—and even scraped the bottom of the pot with the spoon.

“Good !” she exclaimed. “They must have a splendid cook in this house.” She did not know that all cooking is good to a very hungry child.

“And now I am tired,” said Silver-Hair, “I will rest.”

She was tired, it is true. Not tired yet of her naughty ways, but tired in her little bones ; for it was a long time since she had left home, and she had walked a long distance.

So down she sat, first in the chair of the Great, Huge Bear ; but that was too hard ; and besides, her feet did not touch the floor.

Then she sat on the chair of the Middle-Sized Bear; but that was so soft that she sank away down into its depths.

Afterward she tried the chair of the Little, Small, Wee Bear, and found that it suited her exactly.

But soon a very strange thing happened to the child. She felt herself tumbling to the floor, and, scrambling quickly to her feet, she saw that her weight had broken the bottom out of the little chair. The Little, Small, Wee Bear was not, you see, nearly so heavy as Silver-Hair.

"A bed is a better place to rest," she said. "I will see if there is a bed upstairs." No thought had the naughty child of the pretty little chair she had broken.

Into the bed-room she went without knocking, and there stood the three beds in a row. Good housekeepers were the three bears, and everything was in perfect order.

"Such great pillows! They would break

my neck," said Silver-Hair, not finding the bed of the Great, Huge Bear at all to her liking. Down she jumped, leaving the bed-clothing in a sad twist.

"And oh! dear! There is something wrong with the foot of this bed," she exclaimed, after she had tried to lie in the bed of the Middle-Sized Bear.

But after she had lain down in the dainty little bed of the Little, Small, Wee Bear, she was very much pleased. "This is just my size," she said. "Oh! how delightful!"

Indeed it was so soft, and she was so tired, that the first thing she knew she knew nothing at all! There she lay, fast asleep, her lovely hair—for she *did* have lovely hair, although her temper was *not* lovely—lying in loose, bright curls on the pillow.

Now the three bears soon returned, although it has taken me a long time to tell you all that little Silver-Hair did while they were out walking. They came back very

hungry, but sure that the porridge was cool enough to eat. Every one had left his spoon at the side of his porridge-pot when he went out, but returning, they saw the three spoons standing in the three pots.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN AT MY PORRIDGE," cried the Great, Huge Bear, in a gruff voice; and he was not to blame for speaking in this way, because, you see, he had but that one voice.

"AND SOMEBODY HAS BEEN AT MY PORRIDGE," said the Middle-Sized Bear, in a voice, not at all sweet, but not nearly so loud and gruff as his brother's. In a middle voice, I may say.

Then the Little, Small, Wee Bear looked in his porridge-pot, and found that he was worse off than either of the other two. "*Oh,*" he cried, "*my pot is quite empty!*" and surely his was a little, small, wee voice. He was but a child-bear, you know.

"A thief!" exclaimed the Great, Huge

Bear, who always said out just what he thought. "Let us try to find him!"

"Him!" Little did the Great, Huge Bear think that a girl had made all the trouble.

Just as the Great, Huge Bear was about to leave the room in search of the thief, his eye fell upon his arm-chair.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN SITTING IN MY CHAIR," he cried out, in an angry voice; for he saw that the cushion had been moved. It was not lying straight as he had left it.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN SITTING IN MY CHAIR, TOO," said the Middle-Sized Bear, his voice trembling with anger.

"Somebody has been sitting in my chair, too, and the bottom is all out of it!" cried the Little, Small, Wee Bear, in his little, small, wee voice, while the tears rolled in streams down his cheeks.

It did seem as though he had the worst of it, every time. No porridge to eat—no chair

to sit on ! But his brothers quietly made up their minds that they would never see him suffer—no, not while they had each a full porridge-pot and a chair. But they said nothing, having made up their minds that they must find the thief before they made plans for the future.

Upstairs they went, all three of them going to the side of the Great, Huge Bear's bed first. All saw plainly that it was not as it had been left.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN LYING IN MY BED !" Again it was the great, huge voice of the Great, Huge Bear. One glance at the bed was enough to show them that this was the truth ; so the brothers did not deny it. The large pillows were lying at the foot of the bed, as though some one had been vexed and had tossed them there.

"*I* never made up my bed with the pillows at the foot," growled the Great, Huge Bear.

"That is true," said the Middle-Sized Bear,

sadly turning away. "SOMEBODY HAS BEEN LYING IN MY BED," he added, in his middle-sized voice. Sure enough, there was the print of a dusty little shoe on the white quilt!

"Somebody has been lying in my bed." This time it was the Little, Small, Wee Bear that spoke in his little, small, wee voice. Then, as he reached up on tip-toe to look into the bed, he saw little Silver-Hair's rosy face, as she lay there asleep among the pillows. "She does not look like a thief," he said.

Now the great, gruff, growling voice of the Huge Bear had not wakened little Silver-Hair. She had only tossed about in her sleep for a minute, and then settled back on the pillows. Neither did she open her eyes when the Middle-Sized Bear spoke.

But when dear Little, Small, Wee Bear piped in his shrill voice close to her ear, she rubbed her knuckles into her drowsy eyes, and then opened them full on the faces of the three bears standing at her side.

For a few minutes she did not know where she was;—then suddenly she remembered all—her own naughty grumbling at her mamma's breakfast-table, her walk in the woods, the empty house, the pots of porridge, the chairs, the three beds—yes, slowly the doings of the morning came back to her mind, and for a moment she was afraid.

“Why, what are these bears doing in this house?” she thought to herself. “They have no right here.” She forgot that she, herself, had no right there.

“Where are the people who live in this house?” she asked of the Little, Small, Wee Bear. She did not really expect him to answer, but, being nearer her own size, she put the question to him. But the Great, Huge Bear replied:

“*We* are the people who live in this house. How did you come here?”

“Through the door,” said Silver-Hair, sweetly.

"It is still open!" said the Great, Huge Bear. He did not wish to be cruel to her, but he knew that such a naughty girl was not good company for his younger brothers. "If I had only myself to think of," thought he, "I should keep her here, and try to teach her to be good."

"That door is still open!" he repeated, in a still louder voice.

"And this window is open also. May I go through the window?" asked Silver-Hair, looking up at him sadly, with her big, blue eyes.

"As you please," said the Great, Huge Bear; and with one bound the little girl was out in the garden, and away, over the hills, on the road home, while the three bears returned to the breakfast-room.

"What have you there?" asked the Great, Huge Bear, as his youngest brother tried to hide something behind his back.

Then the Little, Small, Wee Bear showed

a blue ribbon which had tied back little Silver-Hair's bright curls, and which had dropped from her head as she sprang through the window.

"What will he do with it?" asked the Great, Huge Bear, turning in surprise to his next younger brother.

"I am sure I don't know. *I* never owned anything of the kind," said the Middle-Sized Bear, with a sigh.

"What will you do with it?" asked the Great, Huge Bear, turning to his little brother.

"This!" said the "Little, Small, Wee Bear, as he tied it, in a bow, through his leather collar. (He was the only one of the three who ever wore a collar). And there he wore it till the day he died.

LITTLE THUMB.

ONCE upon a time, there was a poor man who lived in a small red house. He used to cut wood for a living. He had seven little children, all boys, and the youngest of them was named "Thumb," because he was so very, very small.

I am sure that he was a good boy, but somehow he was always blamed when things went wrong. I am sorry to say that his brothers were not nearly so good as Little Thumb. But he never said an angry word when his father and mother found fault with him for what his brothers had done. I think his parents truly loved Thumb, but they did

not often show their love ; and, indeed, he was so quiet that it is not strange that they did not think him very wise.

They were very fond of their eldest boy, Peter, who was a great talker ; but boys who talk the most are not always the wisest. Thumb kept his mouth shut, but his eyes and ears were always wide open.

As I said, the father of these boys was very poor, and he could not always give them as much food as they wanted. Many a time they went hungry to bed, and often he did not know which way to turn to get bread for them.

One night, when the boys were safe in bed, and he thought they were all sound asleep, he said to his wife :

“ My dear, my heart is very sad when I think of our boys. It is hard for them to see other children well-fed. I fear they must starve before our very eyes. I cannot bear it ! ”

"Yes, it is hard to bear," said the poor mother, while the hot tears ran down her own thin cheeks,—“My heart, too, is breaking. There is not a crumb of bread left in this house.”

“I know what I must do,” said the father. “In the morning, when I go out into the woods with my axe, I will take all the boys with me; and then, when they are not looking, I will run away and leave them. I hope God will take care of them.”

“No, no!” cried the poor mother. “You, *you* must take care of them. God gave them to you.”

“And how can I do it when I have nothing to give them to eat?” he asked. “Can I work any harder than I do, I should like to know? Let them starve in this house, then!”

Ah! the poor mother had nothing to say to that; for she knew how hard it must be to cut wood all the long day; and she went to bed with red eyes, and cried all night.

"Oh ! if their father would only leave me one child—if I could keep Peter, even, maybe I could bear my grief !" But she could not ask this of her husband, for she well knew that Peter ate more than any other one of her boys, and it was for lack of food that they must be left to die in the woods.

Now all this time Little Thumb lay in bed, wide-awake ; and as he heard his father and mother talking, he made up his mind that he must surely find out what they were saying.

He knew by the tones of their voices that they were sad, and he thought perhaps he might help them in some way ; so he got up very softly, and hid himself under his father's chair, and there he could hear every word that was said.

Neither his father nor mother saw him, because he was so very small, and they did not hear him because he was so very quiet. His heart was sad when he saw the tears on his mother's cheeks, and when he saw them

drop into her lap, he wiped the tears from his own eyes. Being so small himself, his own tears were not larger than the head of a pin.

As he sat there under the chair, he heard the whole plan for the next day. He did not blame his father, for he well knew that there was not a crumb of bread in the house.

"I will go to bed now," he said to himself, "and make up my mind what I shall do if my father does try to lose us in the woods. Oh! I can find some way out of all this!"

So, early the next morning, he rose, and went out on the road, and filled his pockets with pebbles; and then he came home, and went to bed again.

Now when Little Thumb's father came to the side of the bed, and said,—“Wake up! boys. I want you to come out and cut wood with me,” the child's eyes were as tight shut as they could be; but, indeed, he had not slept one wink all night.

“Can we not have our breakfast first?” asked Peter.

“My dear child, there is not a crumb of bread in the house!” said the poor mother. The father said not a word, but his teeth were shut tight and hard.

Well, out into the woods they went,—the father with his large axe, and the boys with their small axes,—when one of the boys cried out, looking all around in fear, “Where is our father?”

“Let us go on with our work,” said Little Thumb; “he cannot be lost, you know.”

“No, but *we* are lost,” said his brother. “Father has gone, and we do not know the way home alone.”

Oh! what a loud cry went up from all the six boys when they knew that their father had brought them out into the woods only to lose them. “We shall never see our home again!” they thought. It was a very little house, and they were always hungry there,

but it was all the home they had, and they loved it dearly.

Thumb did not cry ; for he knew that he could take them all back ; and after they had stopped crying, he spoke :

“ I will take you home,” he said.

“ You !” said Peter, with a laugh. “ How do you come to be so wise, all at once ?”

I do not think you would have loved Peter. He was always trying to say something to make Little Thumb angry. But the child smiled.

“ If you will all follow me,” he said, “ I will take you home.”

They *did* follow him,—Peter with the rest ; and they were very soon at their father's door. As they had gone into the woods Thumb dropped his pebbles all along the way ; and then, when they turned to go back, they needed only to follow the path that had been marked out in this way. Oh ! how happy they were to be safe home once more !

As the children stood there, all in a row, outside of the window of their own little house, they heard their father and mother talking to each other.

It seems that the man for whom the father had cut wood, had not paid him for a long time ; but this very day he had sent him some money. It was not very much, but with it the mother had bought some bread and meat, and she was now cooking a chop over the fire.

“Oh, dear !” said she, “if our boys were only here ! Why did I let you lose them all in those thick woods ? Perhaps by this time the bears have eaten them up ! Oh ! where is Peter to-night ?”

Now *some* boys, in Thumb’s place, might have thought, “Peter ! Peter ! It is always Peter of whom my mother thinks ;” but Thumb had not a selfish thought in his little heart. Soon he heard his mother’s voice again :

“I should be glad to see even Little Thumb.

Why did you lose my boys in the woods?" she said again, as she turned to their father.

Now this was not quite fair; for she herself had said that he must do it, and that there was no other way; and how could their father know that the man would pay the money on that very day?

But their father said not a word. He never could say as many words as his wife could say, nor cry as many tears as she could cry; and for this she often blamed the poor man.

Now all this time the boys had been standing in a row outside of the house, in the moonlight; and at last Little Thumb could bear it no longer; so he cried in a loud voice: "Here we are, mother! Here we are!"

He had heard her say: "I should be glad to see *even* Little Thumb," as if she did not love him so very much; but he did not care; he loved her all the same. "Here we are, mother! Here we are!" he cried again.

Then the door flew open, and father and mother caught the children up tight in their arms, and almost hugged the breath out of them. It seemed as if the mother would never loose her hold on Peter.

“You hurt me, mother!” he said at last, “and I am so hungry that I could eat pebbles.”

And then she thought to herself, “Sure enough, he did feel very empty when I hugged him ;” and she was just about to crush him in her arms again, and cry over him for joy that she had him back, when the father said :

“Please, mother, be quick and cook some more chops for the dear children, while I cut the bread.”

Oh ! how happy they were that night ! They all ate until they could eat no more, and then they went to bed. All but Little Thumb dropped off to sleep very soon, but he lay awake until the house was quite quiet. Then, as he heard his father snore, and knew

that his mother would not talk to herself, he, too, went to sleep.

My dear children, you cannot know how sorry I am to tell you that the bread and meat which had saved the lives of Thumb and his brothers, were soon gone, and there was no money to buy more.

A man and a woman and seven boys can eat a great deal of food if they try hard, and before many days, Thumb's father said again to his wife: "I fear our boys must starve before our eyes; I cannot bear it!"

These were the very words which he had said to his wife before, and she answered as before, "My heart, too, is breaking. I have hardly a crumb of bread in the house." She said "hardly," for she had saved one little bit of bread for Peter's breakfast.

Now Thumb was sure that his father would again try to lose them all in the woods; and indeed he was right. That very night he heard his father say again,—and his voice was

even more sad than it had been the first time :

“ When I go out into the woods in the morning, with my axe, I will take all the boys with me, and I will run away again and leave them to be lost. But,” said he, “ the next time I will take them where the bushes are very thick, and then they cannot find their way back as they did before.” (You see he did not know about the pebbles.)

In the morning Thumb awoke very early, but when he tried to go out for pebbles, as before, he found that the door was locked, and he could not find the key. Then he begged a little bit of Peter’s bread and put it in his pocket.

Now when the father said, “ Boys, I want you to come out in the woods with me to-day to cut wood,” Little Thumb slipped behind all the others, and he dropped crumbs of bread all along the way, as he had dropped the pebbles before.

They soon came to a thick, shady place in the woods, and all at once Peter cried out—"Our father has run away again—he is nowhere to be seen! We are lost!"

"I will lead you home again," said quiet Little Thumb; and this time Peter did not laugh, for never before had he been so much afraid.

"Get behind me," said Thumb, as he led the way. He had been the last one in the line coming into the woods, you see, but the first in the line to go back. But how shall I tell you the sad story!

Of all the crumbs that he had dropped on the ground on the way to the woods, not one was left to show the way back. The hungry little birds had eaten them all.

"I do not blame them," said Little Thumb; "I know what it is to be hungry."

"Ah!" said Peter, "you are not so wise after all. I thought, when you put them there, that the birds would eat them up."

Then the six boys began to cry aloud, "We are lost, we are lost!" And even Thumb was seen to wipe a few tears from his own eyes.

Night came on, and they could hear the wind rage, while the rain fell, and a wolf was heard to howl not very far off. They were wet to the skin and very cold, and they began to blame Little Thumb. "You brought us near this wolf," said Peter.

Just then a thought came into Thumb's head. He began to climb a tree, and Peter said: "What are you going to do next?"

The child was so nimble that he could climb like a cat; but he said nothing. He did not quite know, himself, what he should do. When he reached the tree-top, he looked all around,—north, south, east and west,—and, sure enough, he saw a light in a window, which did not seem to be so very far off.

"There is a house about a mile away, I should think," said Thumb, as he let himself

down to the ground again, branch by branch.
"We will go to it."

Now that house was truly *many* miles away, but it looked near to Little Thumb. Up and down, over the wet hills they tramped, often saying that Thumb was to blame for all their troubles ; and at last, nearly tired to death, they knocked at the door of the house, in the window of which was a bright light. They thought that now they were surely safe from all harm ; but I am sorry to say they were far from right.

"Come in," said the voice of a woman, after they had knocked many times. The voice was kind, and they were glad, but they waited till she came to the door herself. After all, she only opened it on a crack, and showed one eye as she spoke.

"Who are you ?" she asked.

Thumb said, "We are seven little brothers who have been lost in the woods ; and we are hungry, and tired, and soaked to the skin.

Feel my hair, how dripping wet it is. I lost my cap in the bushes."

As the woman opened the door wide, she laid her hand on the brown curls, and the tears came into her eyes.

"O my dear boys!" said she, "I must not ask you to come into this house. It belongs to a cruel giant who eats little children. He does not leave even a toe-nail or a hair of the head of any child. It is nearly time for him to come home now. Run away as fast as your legs can carry you, I beg of you; for I think I hear his growl now, as he comes through the woods."

But Little Thumb was brave, and said, "Dear Giant's Wife, we shall starve if we go back to the woods. It can be no worse than that to be eaten by a giant. Then, too, we heard a wolf howl in the woods. *He* will eat us if we go back."

Now, all the time, Thumb thought to himself, "If she will only take us in, maybe I

can think of some way to keep the giant from eating us."

"O come in, poor boys!" said the woman, at last. "Ah! this is a sad world!" So she gave them a good supper of bread and soup; but, as they sat by the fire, eating, and laughing and talking, they heard a loud rap at the door.

"Quick! quick! Get under my bed!" said the giant's wife; and she put the seven boys quite out of sight, and then went to open the door for the giant.

"Is my supper ready?" growled he.

"Yes, dear," said his wife, as he began to sniff around the room from right to left. Thumb wondered how the giant's wife could say "dear" to such a horrid creature.

Then the giant thumped his hand hard on the table. "What is that I smell cooking?" he asked.

"Why, dear, you smell the sheep which is roasting for your supper. A whole sheep!

Now here is a tender bit," and she gave him a leg of mutton to taste.

"I hear a voice under that bed," said he, pushing his plate away ; and he went straight to the bed and pulled the boys out by the hair of the head. It took just seven jerks to get them all out—a jerk for each child.

"This one is about the size of a flea," said the giant, as he laid hold of Thumb. The child did not like to hear this, for he knew that, small as he was, he was much larger than a flea.

"I need you to cook for me, or I should kill you on the spot," said the giant to his wife, for he was very angry with her. "I have half a mind to make you kill these boys for me."

"O do not make me do that !" she cried. "Wait a day or two." (The poor woman thought to herself, "If he will only put off this wicked deed, perhaps he will change his mind.") "You have plenty to eat in the house," she added, aloud.

The giant grunted, and said, "Well, what you say is the truth, for once. I will wait until morning, but no longer."

Then he sat down to his supper, and ate and drank so much that he grew very sleepy and went to bed early; and after he had fallen asleep, Little Thumb could hear him snore and snore till he shook the whole house.

"At last I can go to sleep myself," said Thumb, turning over on his side.

Now this same ugly giant had seven little children of his own, all girls; and, strange to say, he loved them very much. He loved nobody and nothing else in this whole world. They were very pretty, with fair skin, and pink cheeks, and lovely curling hair. I am sorry to say that they were very cruel, like their father, who often said to them:

"You cannot eat little children *yet*, but I will tell you how to do it when you grow up. Even now you can bite them, if you try hard;" and this they often did.

That night their mother had put them to bed very early, and there they lay in a row, all in one bed, every one with a crown of gold on her head. (I have heard that the head that wears a crown does not rest well, but these girls slept soundly the whole night long.) They wore their crowns instead of night-caps.

When Little Thumb saw their mother put the little girls to bed, he thought to himself :

“ Perhaps the giant will wake up in the night and be sorry he did not kill us. I know what to do.”

So, after they were asleep, he went softly to their bedside, and took the seven crowns off the seven heads. Then he went back to the bed where his brothers lay, and put a crown on the head of each one ; and last of all, he put the smallest crown on his own head, and lay down by Peter's side, and began to snore. But he was wide awake the whole time.

Soon he heard a step on the stairs, and the giant stood by his side. "Grunt, grunt, grunt!" and the giant put his great hand on the small head. Thumb's heart seemed to stand still, as he lay there in the dark. One more grunt, and then the giant spoke:

"Well, it is a good thing that I felt for your crown, my sweet little girl! What if I had killed you, and your lovely sisters! I thought your mother put you to sleep in the other bed. If I had killed you all, instead of those boys, my heart would have been broken."

Thumb thought to himself—"How could it break? You have no heart;" but of course he said not a word.

Then the giant went to the bed where the little girls lay, and with his big club he quickly killed them all.

"What a fine meal you will make for me," he said; "you are so soft and tender. I must ask six other giants to dine with me, for it will

be a long time before I can give them such a good dinner again." Then he went back to bed and soon he forgot all his bad deeds in sleep.

But his poor wife lay awake. She had heard him go up stairs, she had heard the heavy strokes of the club. "He has killed those seven little boys," she thought, "and I will have the cooking of them. How can I ever get through that day's work!"

As soon as the giant had gone to sleep, Little Thumb shook his brothers, one by one, and said :

"Wake up! We must be out of this house before it is light. Come with me;" and they all crept softly down stairs, and out into the woods.

Oh! how brightly the stars twinkled overhead! Then Thumb put his finger on his lips to show them that they must not speak a word, and leading the way into the woods as fast as he could run, he made a sign for the others to follow.

When the giant awoke in the morning, he said to his wife : "Go up stairs and bring down those young scamps and cook them for my dinner. I choose to eat *cooked* meat to-day." So off the poor woman went with a sad heart. But soon she came running down stairs, crying at the top of her voice :

"What have you done ! What have you done ! You have killed my own lovely girls—dead they lie in that room above ! What have you done ! What have you done !"

"What have *I* done ? do you say ?" asked the giant, when he found that the children were truly dead. "Indeed it is all your own fault ! Why did you not let me kill those young rogues last night, when I wanted to do it ? Aha ! madam, you shall pay for all this—you and they too—but I will see to *them* first. Go and get me my seven-league boots this minute ! It shall go hard with me if I do not kill them before the sun sets ;" and he was off after the boys at full speed.

But he did not take the same road that Thumb and his brothers had taken. He went a far longer way around, but at last he came very near to the spot where they were hiding, though he did not know it.

It was a dark cave in the side of a mountain, not very far from their own home ; and here the boys lay in one heap, with their hearts beating so loudly that they thought that the giant must surely hear them as he passed the mouth of the cave.

Soon they felt the mountain shake from top to bottom over their heads, and they could not think what made it shake ; but I will tell you.

As the giant had worn his seven-league boots that morning, he had been able to travel many miles a minute ; but going so fast had made him very tired, and he had thrown himself down on the side of the mountain to rest. That was what made the shaking which frightened them so greatly. Being so very tired, the giant soon fell asleep.

Then Little Thumb said to his brothers :
“Now you all run home as fast as your legs
can carry you, and I will wait here for a
while.”

“But what will become of you?” asked
one of his brothers. (It was not Peter who
said this).

“O I will come home to you before
very long,” said Thumb. “Now all of you
run after Peter, before he gets out of sight.
You surely know the way home from this
cave.”

Peter had taken to his heels, and was far
on the road toward home, almost before the
words were out of Thumb's mouth.

When he found himself alone, Thumb
stepped out of the cave, and went to the side
of the giant as he lay there snoring. Thumb
knew what it was himself to act as though he
were asleep when he was wide awake, so he
did not trust the giant. He waited a minute
to see if he were truly asleep.

Then, when he was quite sure, he took off the seven-league boots from the giant's great feet and put them on his own little feet. As they were fairy boots they always fitted any one who wore them, so they fitted just as if they were made for Thumb.

He was able now to go seven-leagues at each step, so he ran off to the King, and said :

"I am a poor boy who cannot do much in this world, but I should be glad to do something to serve you."

Then the King said—"Where did you get those boots?"

"I took them from a giant," said Thumb. "One who is very wicked and cruel, and who made no use of them but to run after little children, whom, if he caught, he would kill and eat."

Then the King said: "You did well to take the boots. Now I want you to use them to bring me news of my troops who are fight-

ing very bravely, and from whom I have not heard for many days."

Off ran little Thumb, and in this big world there was not so happy a boy as was he on that day. He brought back good news to the King in less time than any man could have done it, because, you see, he wore the seven-league boots.

"My brave boy, how shall I pay you?" asked the King.

"Let me go home for a day, to see my dear father and mother," said Little Thumb.

I wish you could have seen the King laugh at those words!

"Why, go and stay a month," he said; "and here is a purse to take with you. But be sure to come back at the end of that time, for I can never get along again without you and your boots."

"Come in," said a sad voice, when Thumb once more knocked at his mother's door.

Hungry again,—it seems as though I have

always to say that they were hungry—they all came to the door,—father, mother and the six boys, to see who cared to come to their poor little house. Thumb's mother put out her arms and drew him toward her.

“O my darling!” she cried, “I thought the giant had surely eaten you;” and then the child knew for the first time in his life that, small as he was, he had a large place in his mother's heart. “Ah, if I only had something for you to eat!” she said.

Little Thumb took the purse out of his pocket and dropped it into her lap.

“What is this? and from whom did it come?” asked his mother.

“A purse full of gold, and it is the gift of the King,” said he.

And then Thumb told her of all that had happened to him after his brothers left him, ending with the words—“And now, mother dear, no one of us need ever be hungry again.”

“Good luck!” cried Peter. “Mother, send one of my little brothers to buy some chops, and cook one for me as quickly as ever you can. And remember, please, that I like my chops rare!”

THE WHITE CAT.

IN a country far away, and in the ages long ago, there lived a King who had three sons, and they were fine young fellows, of whom any father might well have been proud. And, indeed, the King *was* very proud of them, and fond of them, for they had never, any one of them, made a sad hour for him in all their lives.

However, there were some people of his court who, for selfish reasons, tried to make the old King believe that his sons would be glad if he should die, so that the kingdom might come to them.

You and I know that this was untrue; and

when the King first heard it, he did not believe one word of the story, either ; but over and over again, these wicked men told him, in one way or another, that his sons were not true to him ; so that at last he began to think that there might be some truth in the tale.

Then the King said to himself: "Hard as it is for me to do it, I must send the three princes to a far country. I cannot bear to see them every day, and know that they are only waiting for my crown."

So he sent for his sons and said to them :

"My dear children, I know that I am growing old. My hair is white, my sight is dim, and my sense of hearing is not nearly so keen as it once was. More than that, the cares of my kingdom are quite too great for my strength.

"I should like to make one of you king in my place, but among the three it is not easy to choose. Then, too, I should die for want of something to fill up my time and my mind if I gave up my kingdom, for I have

always been a very busy man. There are no little children in my household, with whom I might amuse myself. I have not even a little dog. If——” and the King paused.

The three sons looked at one another. A dog! What a strange fancy! But surely it would be no hard matter to get a dog, since their father seemed suddenly to have grown fond of pets. But the King continued:

“If I had a little dog to amuse me I might be willing to give up my kingdom. I command that every one of you, my three sons, go to a distant country,—no two to the same country,—and bring me the most beautiful dog you can find. The one who brings me the most perfect animal may be sure of my throne. I care neither how far you go, nor how long you may be gone.”

The princes bowed low before their father and bade him good-bye.

“Suppose we agree to meet here, before your throne, at the end of a year,” said the eldest.

"So be it," said the King.

Now I may as well begin by telling you that I shall have very little to say about the journeys of the two elder brothers. They traveled through many countries, and saw wonderful sights. But the very strangest things happened to the youngest son, and my story will be almost wholly about him.

For the first time in his young life, out alone in the cold, wide world, without even a person to whom to speak—it is no wonder that he felt lonely. But he soon forgot himself in the work that was before him.

The story of the Prince's search spread fast through the towns and villages through which he passed, and hundreds of dogs were brought to him, that he might choose.

The first one that pleased his fancy was a black-and-tan puppy ; but, seeing a small Skye terrier that he thought still more beautiful, he gave away the puppy and bought the fluffy little terrier. Such a scrap as it was ! When

the Prince took it up in his arms, it looked like nothing so much as a bundle of gray-blue fringe.

“Come here!” said the Prince, trying to make the little thing follow. And he could only tell where the dog’s eyes were, by noticing which end wriggled toward him.

“Surely my father must be pleased with this dog,” he said.

But soon a graceful spaniel bounded to the side of the Prince, and the terrier was given away, and the spaniel was bought. It was useless, you see, for the Prince to keep more than one dog, for the King had told him to bring but one.

Now I cannot describe to you all the dogs that the Prince bought and gave away that day. I can only tell you that, when night came, he was almost tired to death, and a great Irish setter, which had been his last purchase, had run away from him, and was lost in the woods.

Night had come on, a dreadful storm had arisen, and the wind howled. There was no moon, and not a star was to be seen. By means of a flash of lightning he saw a great, gray stone house not far away, and groping his way to the gate, he knocked.

The gate opened and he walked up the broad steps, and again he knocked. The doors rolled back, a curtain rose, and he found himself in a palace, the splendor of which fairly dazzled him. His own father's palace was not nearly so beautiful.

The walls were covered with paintings such as his eyes had never before beheld. The windows were curtained with cloth-of-gold, looped back with jewels the size of robins' eggs—rubies, sapphires and emeralds—while the ceiling was crusted with diamonds, and the floor was inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

The Prince thought he felt a zephyr, light, as though caused by the motion of wings, and, lifting his eyes, he saw twelve lovely, soft

hands in the air—every hand holding a torch. Then he heard a song of welcome which seemed to proceed from one of the inner rooms, far beyond ; and as he heard his own name in the song, he knew that the welcome was meant for him.

Onward, onward he went, following the torches which lighted him, from room to room, every one seeming more wonderful, in its beauty, than the last.

No one spoke to him, and indeed it was well that it was so, for he could have found no words with which to reply. He was struck dumb with the glitter of all that he saw. He forgot that he was cold, wet and tired, and that he had not eaten a mouthful since early morning. But *The Hands* did not forget.

When he had reached the last of the many rooms, a chair was placed for him, close by a great, open fire. Ah, how the logs crackled and blazed ! “Welcome ! welcome !” they seemed to say, with their tongues of flame.

Then the kind, tender Hands brought the fragrant water for his bath, and princely, jeweled clothing, fit for his father's son.

Again a distant song of welcome, again the torches in advance, and he was led into the great banquet-hall. There a dainty table was spread, brilliant with gold, silver and crystal, while flowers filled the air with their fragrance.

The table was set for two.

"Two!" said the Prince to himself; "and *I am only one!*"

The music ceased, and there was a long pause. Then he heard a voice, sweeter than the sweetest music, and a graceful little figure, covered with a veil from head to foot, came toward him.

Behind her appeared a long line of cats, walking in pairs, arm in arm, or rather paw in paw. The smallest and most beautiful cat carried the train of her mistress. With a swift, graceful motion, the little figure cast aside her veil, and a perfectly White Cat

stood before the Prince. Her hair was long and silky, and her eyes glowed like rubies. She spoke :

“ You are right, Prince. There is only one of *you*, but there is also one of *me*, and one and one make two. Cats cannot count away up into the high numbers—as you can, I doubt not—but I know that one and one make two.”

The Prince bent low before the White Cat, being too greatly surprised to utter a word.

“ And the table is set for two, as you said, Prince ; and you and I are the two. We will dine.”

Again the Prince bowed. “ Shall I offer her my arm ? ” he said to himself. He had never, in all his life, taken a cat in to dinner, and he was not quite sure how the thing should be done.

But the White Cat did not wait to be led. She took her place at the head of her own table, and motioned to the Prince to take the vacant seat. He obeyed.

"How beautiful you are!" he said, happening to catch her eye, as the soup was served. At last he had found his tongue, and the first use he made of it was to say these words.

"I know it," said the White Cat, calmly. "But beauty is only skin-deep." Then she smoothed her own silky coat and smiled.

The Prince had often heard this saying, but he wondered how a *cat* could ever have heard it. In fact he could hardly think that she was really a cat. He tried, in vain, to catch the least little bit of a me-ow in her voice. Whenever she *did* speak, she spoke like a lady; but she said very little. Plainly she did not enjoy talking, so he became very quiet also.

But, quiet as the Prince was, he was not idle. Far from it. Not having tasted food since early morning, you may know that he was very hungry. Such dainty food he had never before eaten, and he thought he could hardly have said: "No, I thank you, madam," if the White Cat had asked him to share her

mouse-pie, for it looked like a very good one. However, she did not offer him a piece of *that*.

After the Prince had dined, his hostess led the way to the grand drawing-room, and there she seemed rather more willing to talk with her guest.

Once, as she shook her head in high glee at something which the Prince had said, and which she thought very funny, a little locket which she wore around her neck opened, and he saw that it contained a picture. He asked to look at it, and she laid it in his hand. At the first glance he started, and the look which he turned upon the White Cat was a question in itself.

"Yes," she said. "I see that you know that this is your own portrait. Ask me nothing, I beg of you, for I can tell you nothing."

For a long time she sat in deep, sad thought, and not a word was said. Then, as the sound of slow, sweet music seemed to float in upon

the air, from a distance, she arose and bade him good-night.

Left alone with his own thoughts, he blamed himself again and again for having asked to look at the picture. Then, with a deep sigh, he withdrew to his own room, and soon forgot everything in sleep.

The sun was high in the heavens when the Prince awoke the next morning ; and, before he was able to remember all the strange things which had happened to him, still stranger sounds fell on his ear.

“Where am I ?” he exclaimed, springing from his bed, “and what wild sounds do I hear ?”

He rushed to the open window, and looked off on a hill, near the palace. There he saw a great gathering of cats,—hundreds of them, of all sizes, colors and ages,—forming in order for the hunt.

At the same time he heard a loud knock at the door of his own room. The White Cat had

sent to ask him to join in the day's sport ; for she was to lead the hunting-party, mounted on a huge monkey. The thoughtful hostess had sent him a suit of hunter's green; the horns were sounding, and the cats were wild to be off. The Prince was delighted, and soon joined the happy party below.

"But I have no horse," he said ; and even as he spoke, a coal-black steed stood, stamping on the ground, at his side.

Up and down, over hill and dell, the merry hunters sped, the White Cat always far in advance of the others, and the Prince following hard after her. A wilder party you never saw. Many a troop of riders had he seen start off from his father's palace, but never one like this. At last they paused on the bank of a river.

"What may I bring to refresh you ?" asked the Prince, kneeling at the feet of the White Cat. "Tired and thirsty I know you must be."

"Milk," she laughed. "*Milk in a saucer.*"

To right, to left, the Prince looked, in surprise ; but before he could say a word, she bounded on the monkey's back and was off again.

Night came at last, and with it returned to the Palace of the White Cat, a dusty and tired, but happy and good-humored band of hunters.

"Have you enjoyed the day, Prince?" asked his hostess.

"How can you ask? I have never known one so pleasant," he answered.

"You shall know many such," said she ; and she kept her promise. How the days flew by the Prince hardly knew. Riding, driving, hunting, walking, through all the bright hours of sunshine,—music, and dancing, and merry talk when the evening came.

Is it any wonder that the Prince was happy ? That he quite forgot that he had a country of his own and that his father awaited him in that

far country, and that he had once—oh, how long-ago that time seemed!—that he had once been sent out in search of a dog?

“Now, when you leave me,” began the White Cat, one evening, as they two sat together in the grand drawing-room——.

“*When I leave you!*” exclaimed the Prince. “Must that time ever come?”

“Yes, at the end of a year; and that year is almost over.”

“True,” said the Prince. “It will be a year to-morrow since I first knocked at your palace door. How quickly the time has passed! Oh! if I *must* return to my father——”

“And you must,” said the White Cat, in a cold, calm, yet sweet voice.

“If I must,” repeated the Prince, “will you not go with me? My father would surely receive you with open arms. Every one who sees you must love you as——”

“I thought the King commanded you to

bring him a *dog*," said she, a queer smile playing around the corners of her mouth.

"Yes, he did so," answered the Prince. "And having no dog to present, I cannot return to him."

"You will start to-night," said the White Cat. "You will ride the coal-black steed, and I will give you a dog, which you will carry to the King."

Saying this, she walked into the banquet-hall, and, taking a walnut from the table, she held it close to the ear of the Prince. Shaking it slightly she said :

"Do you hear anything?"

"Yes," he answered. "I hear the barking of a little dog. Am I right?"

"You are," said the White Cat. "Good-bye. We shall meet again."

"We shall meet again!" Over and over the Prince said these words to himself, as he rode away the next day, on his lonely journey.

"Will my brothers remember? Will they

meet me in the palace? Will my father prefer my dog to those of the others?" He almost dreaded the choice. "What if mine should be chosen!" he thought. "Ah, what would a kingdom be without *her*!" he sighed.

Now, owing to the fact that the coal-black steed flew like lightning over the road, the youngest of the King's sons was the first to reach his palace upon the day fixed for the meeting of the three brothers. The others arrived soon after, however, each sure of his success, and I assure you it was not very easy to make a choice between the two dogs which they had brought.

The King was puzzled, fixing his eyes first on one and then on the other. Then he turned toward his youngest son, and, seeing no dog in the Prince's hands, his anger rose.

"Will this please you, O King! my father?"

At these words, a little dog jumped out of

the walnut shell—an atom of an animal, and yet perfect in every way. The King's choice was made, and neither of the two brothers had a word to say.

All that night their father lay awake, tossing from side to side on his bed. "To exchange my kingdom for that little brute!" he said. "I cannot do it." And so he arose the next morning with another plan in his head.

"The search for the dog was far too easy," said he to his sons. "A crown cannot be given up for such a trifle. Go away again, all three of you, and he who can bring me at the end of a year a piece of cambric fine enough to be passed through the eye of this needle"—showing them one so fine that they could hardly see it—"he shall have my kingdom."

Again the three sons made ready for a long journey. Again they took, every one, a different road, but I need not tell you that the

youngest went straight to the palace of the White Cat.

She asked no questions—she received him with a very warm welcome, and it seemed to both as if they had never been parted. And so, for nearly another year, the Prince forgot that he had started on the search for anything other than pleasure. And pleasure he surely found ; for the days passed so quickly and so merrily that he thought that the White Cat must be joking when she said to him :

“It will be a year to-morrow since you came back to me.”

“A year ? Surely not,” said the Prince.

“I said *a year*,” she replied, smiling ; “and yet you have not found that piece of cambric.”

The Prince started ; for he had never told her a word about his father’s second command. But now, it seems, she knew all about it.

“And who told you of that ?” he asked, in an almost sulky tone.

"Never mind. It is well for you that *somebody* told me, else how should you ever be able to obey your father?"

Again she stepped into the banquet-hall, and again she returned with a walnut.

"My weaving-cats have woven a piece of cambric for you, and it is here, in this nut-shell," said the White Cat, as she laid it in his open hand. "You will drive to your father's palace in great state to-morrow. I do not choose that you should again ride the coal-black steed."

The parting on the next morning was very, very hard—far harder than the first had been. The Prince trembled when he thought of the fineness of the cambric. Perhaps, too, the White Cat forgot to say, this time—"We shall meet again." In any case she did *not* say it, and the heart of the Prince was heavy as he took his seat in the gilded coach, behind the twelve milk-white horses.

People bowed low before him as he drove

along, and gave him greeting ; but he answered them not a word.

“Perhaps they will think I am dumb,” he said. “Ah, well ! so I am—dumb with grief !”

This time he was the last of the three brothers to reach the palace gate ; for he lingered long as he drew near, fearful lest the kingdom might be his. “And what would a kingdom be without her !” he sighed, in the same words he had used before.

Well, the oldest brother presented *his* piece of cambric. It was as light as down, and as fine as a baby’s hair, but it could not be passed, wholly, through the eye of the needle, and it was laid aside.

Then the second brother offered his piece. It was as fine as the morning mist, but just as the King thought to draw it forth from the needle’s eye—for it was nearly through it—he found that he could pull it no further.

The King laid this piece aside also. “My

kingdom is still my own," he said softly to himself.

And now the youngest son bent low before the throne.

"That tiresome nut again!" exclaimed the King, and the two brothers turned their noses up, ever so slightly.

"Will this please you, O King, my father?" said the Prince, as he crushed the walnut, thinking to see the folds of cambric, soft and fine as a cobweb. But alas! as the outer shell fell to the floor, he held in his hands a hazelnut.

"By no means!" said the King, angry indeed, while the brothers laughed aloud.

"There is surely some mistake," muttered the Prince. He crushed the shell of the hazelnut, and a cherry-stone fell at his feet.

"This is a trick. She has deceived me!" he gasped; and his hand trembled, as he cracked the cherry-stone. Only a mustard-seed lay in his palm.

Quickly flashed across his mind the thought —“ She did not say—‘ We shall meet again ! ’ ” And, in his sorrow, he thrust his thumb-nail through the mustard-seed.

A piece of cambric, soft and light as a snow-flake, floated off in the air ; but the King bent from his throne and caught it in his hand.

At sight of this the smiles faded from the faces of the brothers, and the King said :

“ I have no doubt that we shall be able to manage this.”

And he was right. Ten yards wide and a hundred yards long was the piece of cambric, and yet it slid through the eye of the needle in less time than it has taken me to tell you that it was done. Still the Prince did not seem proud of his success, or happy in it.

“ What more can he want,” whispered the eldest brother. “ Is he not content with a kingdom ? ”

But the King spoke once more :

“ I repent my promise. My speech was

far too hasty. What! A kingdom for a bit of cambric? And yet I have given my word, and the word of a king is no light matter. Once more go forth and search, but this time it shall be for what is far more worthy of a prince's quest. The one who shall return with the most beautiful woman in the world—he shall have her for his queen, and my crown shall be his. *I have said it!*”

Was it not strange that the King did not seem to remember that he had already broken his word twice? Nobody, however, dared to remind him of the fact.

Again the three sons bowed low and left the palace, and again they went forth to far countries, no two taking the same road. I cannot tell you of the journeys of the two elder brothers, but you will guess, at once, that again the youngest hastened to the palace of the White Cat.

Another year of pleasure, of feasting, of driving, riding, walking—of music, dancing,

and laughter—why, I have told you twice, already, how such days were spent—and the time had come when he must return to his father's home, and again it was the White Cat who told him that they must part.

“I shall never return,” said the Prince, sadly. “I have no desire to be a king. And, more than that, the most beautiful woman in the world cannot be found in a day's search, and one day is all that is left to me. I will leave you, if I must, but return to my father's palace—never!”

“Indeed you will, and that before to-morrow's sun sets!” and her eyes blazed like rubies. “And not only so, but a beautiful princess will make the journey with you. O if you only knew what it costs me to speak in this way!”

But the eyes of the Prince were bent upon the floor, and he gave neither word nor look in answer.

Then the White Cat broke forth in a tone,

louder than he had ever heard her use before —“ Cut off my head and tail this minute, and throw them into the fire upon the hearth ! ”

The Prince covered his face with his hands, and trembled from head to foot ; but he gave no other sign of having heard a word she said.

In her anger the White Cat stamped one little foot. “ In my own house my word is law,” she said.

“ Then I must break the law,” said the Prince, sadly. “ I love you far too well ”——

“ What ! You love me, and you refuse to obey me ! I can cut off my own tail, at least ; ” and she laid her paw on the sword at his side. But his hand checked her. She could not draw it.

“ Trust me,” she said, in soft, pleading tones. “ All will turn out well. *Remember the mustard seed.* ”

At these words, and with a mighty cry, the Prince drew his sword, and smote off, first the

tail, and then the head, of the White Cat.

His sword seemed to cut the empty air, and the beautiful animal was gone in a twinkling, and in her place he saw the most lovely princess that his eyes had ever beheld. Glittering in satin and lace, her robes sparkling with jewels, which shone also on neck and arms and in her hair, she seemed like a being from a brighter world.

Then fell on his ear the sounds of merry talk and laughter, and the room was full of men and maids, in waiting upon the Princess. Her gracious smiles were everywhere, but her very sweetest smile she gave to the Prince.

Then, at one wave of her lily hand, the men and maids withdrew, and he was left alone to hear the story of the Life of the White Cat.

And yet *not* a cat, for—but I must begin my story at the beginning, as the Princess did, when, seated in a golden chair, with a pearl screen in her hand to keep off the glare of the

fire, she told the Prince what, up to this time, she had kept in the secret depths of her heart.

* * * * *

Away back in her early days, she had lived—not the kitten-life, which, if she had really been a cat, she might have looked back upon with pleasure, but a baby-life as happy as any child had ever known. She had a fond father, and a mother who thought her the most lovely child in this big world. No wish was denied her, and, in fact, from her little cradle, she ruled the whole house.

“It is not good for a child to have every wish of her heart granted,” said the Princess, pausing in her story to drop a tear on the pearl screen. “You saw me stamp my foot to-night. I used to do that sometimes when I was a child.”

Well, as the little girl grew older, she learned to notice what went on around her, and she saw that her mother was not quite content. Often and often she would sit and

sigh by the hour, and her father, who was the ruler of many kingdoms, (I should have told you that he was a king) was not able to comfort his Queen.

"What is the matter, my darling?" he would often say. "Do I not love you dearly? Is not our child beautiful?" But still the Queen would sigh.

At last she said to him: "Our life here is just the same, day after day. I have never seen any country but this. I hear that there are palaces far grander than ours, mountains higher than those on the other side of the lake, rivers that flow over sands of gold, and, better than all, gardens whose fruits are as soft and as pink as my baby's cheek, and which melt in the mouth with a sweetness I have never yet tasted. The fairies keep the keys to these gardens. I long to see those fairies, and to eat those fruits."

"Go, my darling!" said the King; and, although tears stood in her eyes, the Queen

kissed her child and set off on her journey.

After many long days and nights of travel,—all of which tired her not, for she thought only of the fruit in the garden of the fairies—she reached a palace not nearly so beautiful as her own, but to her eyes it seemed far finer.

She knocked at the gate, but no one answered. She waited, but no one appeared. Still she did not lose heart, for over the garden wall, which was too high to climb, she saw the fruit, for the sake of which she had taken her long journey.

But nobody—not even a queen, can keep her hopes up forever ; and at last she lay in her tent, weary, ill, and sad at heart. She had little thought that she should ever rise again from her couch ; still less, that she might enter the garden and gather the precious fruit.

“I shall never taste it,” she said one day, to one of the ladies of her court, who had

followed her to this far country, and who sat by her side and held her hand.

“And why should you wish to taste it? I should like to know,” a sharp voice was heard to ask from the other side of the Queen’s couch; and, turning her aching head, she saw an ugly little old woman, with a cap, half the height of her body, perched on the top of her head. “Have you no fruit in your own country?”

“Plenty, but none like yours,” replied the Queen. “I am dying, as you see, for want of it!”

“Many unkind things have been said of me,” said the fairy, (for, as you may know, this was one of the fairy-sisters who owned the garden), “but, among them all, it was never said that I was cruel to the sick and dying. You may eat the fruit if you will pay the price.”

At these words the Queen put her hand under her pillow to feel for a purse of gold,

and the fairy, knowing what she meant to offer, burst into a loud laugh.

"Since when did a fairy take *gold* for payment?" she asked. Here she snatched the purse and flung it over her shoulder.

"Name your price," said the Queen in a feeble voice.

"A child, perhaps?" said the wicked old woman, slyly watching the face of the poor, sick mother.

"A child!" repeated the Queen, in surprise and fear.

"Yes," said the fairy, "I said *a child*. O you need not pretend not to know what I mean. You have a child at home. Give her to me, and the fruit shall be yours. She shall live like a princess."

"Oh!" gasped the Queen, "I cannot give you my little daughter. And yet, if I cannot get the fruit, I must surely die, and what, then, may become of her!— I will send her to you," she added, after a pause, closing her

eyes as if to shut from her sight the face of her child.

“All will be well. Send me the child within twenty days,” said the fairy, as she unlocked the garden gate. “Enter!” she commanded, turning to the Queen, who was only too glad to obey.

Sweeter even than she had hoped, did she find the fruit to be, and after eating so much that the court-lady feared that she might make herself ill again, she ordered load after load of it to be taken home to her own palace.

This strange fruit was of a kind that might be kept hundreds of years without spoiling, and the ugly fairy was quite willing that the Queen should send away all that she desired.

But back in her own country, and living her life by the side of the good King, the mother's heart felt that it could not bear parting, forever, from an only child. And oh! how could the Queen break the news to the father

who loved his little daughter beyond everything else in the world.

"My love," said the King, one day, seeing the sad look on the face of the Queen, "Why are you so unhappy? Is not the fruit so sweet as you thought to find it? Do you still want anything that it is in my power to get?"

Bursting into tears, she told him of her promise, and that ten of the dreadful twenty days had already passed.

Pale and silent, the King left his palace, but not one unkind word did he say to the Queen. Claspng his child in his own arms—for he would trust her to none else—he carried her to the top of the highest tower in his kingdom. Up the staircase of ten thousand steps he bore her, pressing her to his heart, and kissing her, as she lay asleep in his arms.

Locking her in a secret room, he left her there, and came down, intending to talk over,

with the Queen, plans for taking care of her while she was thus hidden.

But the fairy heard of the deed as soon as it was done—just *how* she heard I do not know—but that very day she sent out a great dragon which breathed flame and smoke through the entire kingdom, and in fear lest the very tower in which the child was hidden should be burned, the King made up his mind to give her up. And so the Queen herself, followed by the chief lady of her court, made the journey to the fairy-palace, and laid the lovely child in the arms of the ugly old woman.

Now you must not think that the fairies were cruel to the little girl. No, indeed. She slept all night in a crib made of pure gold, and she ate bread and milk out of a pearl bowl set with diamonds, and she had, for her playmate, a little princess who lived in the palace before she came; but who could remember nothing of her own father and

mother, and could not tell how she came to be there with the fairies. And, indeed, our own little princess soon almost forgot her own parents; for happy children soon forget.

The child's room was the topmost one in a very high tower, into which no door opened; and when the fairies came to visit her, they always flew through the window.

Now, one day, the Princess sat in her room alone. It was nearly sunset, and she was thinking her own thoughts, when, looking down on the lawn below, she saw what looked to her like a prince. She had never seen a prince, it is true, but she knew, in a moment, that this must be one.

He spoke to her, and she answered, in what he thought the sweetest tone he had ever heard. Thus an hour slipped away, and then he was gone. But he came again, and yet again, day after day.

One day he failed to come, and then she

knew, by the sad feeling in her heart, that she could never be quite happy until she could get out of that tower and run away into the wide world with her Prince! And so she began to plan ways of escape.

At last such a bright thought came into her head! She gathered the cobwebs which the spiders had spun outside of her window-panes, and of these she made a rope. Once, she let it down softly, and the Prince tied his picture at the end of it and she drew it up to her room.

Every day she gathered new cob-webs, and so the rope grew thicker and thicker. She kept the rope and the picture hidden in a bird's nest below her window-sill. At last she thought that the rope was strong enough to bear her own weight; but just as she was about to trust herself to it, the ugly fairy flew through the window, on the back of a dragon, snapped the rope in two, and the Princess fell, fainting, to the floor.

"You would climb like a cat—BE A CAT!" said the old fairy; and, touching the Princess with her wand, a huge White Cat stood at the window where she had been. Oh! the dreadful change!

"But you shall still live like a princess, as I promised your mother," said the ugly fairy. "Follow me!"

And the White Cat (as we must again call her) found herself in a palace, surrounded by everything beautiful, with thousands of cats-in-waiting to obey her commands, and hands to serve her on every side; for the fairy did not forget that she was a princess born.

"Stay there!" said the fairy as she turned from the palace gate, "and if the Prince of whom you are so fond is truly fond of you, he will find you and set you free. When he, whose picture you wear fastened to your right paw, comes for you, you may go with him. I promise to make no effort to bring you back; and a fairy never breaks her word. *I am a*

fairy!" These last words were said very proudly, and, in a twinkling, she was gone.

* * * * *

Now the Princess took much more time to tell her story than *I* have taken to tell it, and yet, to the listening Prince, it seemed far too short. When it was finished, she rose, put her pearl screen behind her back, and, looking up sweetly into the eyes of the Prince said :

"The Story of the White Cat is ended!"

But the Prince's joy, had, he thought, just begun. With the picture in his right hand, and his left hand on his heart, he bent his head low before the Princess, and kneeling, kissed her hand.

"Rise," said she, laying a white hand on his head. "I will go with you to your father's palace."

"Who comes this way?" said the old King, as, seated on his throne, he looked down the long line of dukes, lords, and ladies who fell back to make room for his youngest son, re-

turning to his father's court with the "most beautiful woman in the world."

"Go forth," cried the King, to a page who stood near—"tell my other two sons, who have not yet arrived, and whom you will, I suppose, meet on their return, that they must come to me alone. Their search must prove in vain; for surely the most beautiful woman in the world is here. I lay my crown at the feet of the Prince, my youngest son."

But, even as the King was speaking, the two brothers entered; and they, at sight of the Princess, stood back into line with the others of the court. The eldest brother whispered, softly: "My father has chosen."

"Not so," said the gracious Princess, giving a hand to each of the fair ladies who had returned with the brothers—"three sons and three daughters has our lord, the King. If the cares of state are really too great for him, may he not divide his kingdom between his two older sons? *My* Prince may, if he so wills,

receive from my hand my own father's crown, which has long waited for me in my own country. He will reign over my kingdom, and I will reign over his heart."







